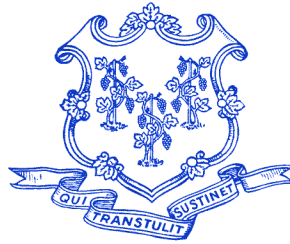


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Senate Majority Leader Bob Duff
Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 917: AA Establishing a Working Group to Study the Implementation of Federal Title IX Protections for All Municipal Recreation Areas and School Sports Facilities
Planning and Development Committee
February 1, 2023

Senator Rahman, Representative Kavros DeGraw, Senator Fazio, Representative Zullo and distinguished members of the Planning and Development Committee, I would like to thank you today for allowing me to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 917, *An Act Establishing a Working Group to Study the Implementation of Federal Title IX Protections for All Municipal Recreation Areas and School Sports Facilities*.

As some of you may know, the United States Women's Soccer Team a year ago reached a settlement with their governing body, U.S. Soccer, ending a years-long legal battle in which a group of very brave female athletes sought to close the gender pay gap that exists in American soccer. This victory not only impacts the lives of the athletes who will now be fairly compensated for their work, but also serves as a beacon of encouragement to young women around the world who are forced to navigate a world of unequal opportunity.

Despite the encouragement that this success offers, there are many remaining injustices that continue to disadvantage female athletes. Each one of those inspiring women started out as a young girl playing on a local sports team. It is terrible to imagine how inspiring female athletes might never have had the opportunity to succeed without equal access to athletic participation, as required by Title IX. Unfortunately, inequality continues to constrain women in sports, even at the local level, as Title IX protections have not been adequately extended to inform municipal planning. Schools and municipalities often construct or update facilities for male athletes, without ensuring that female athletes also have access to the requisite facilities for their sport.

Consider the example of a municipality constructing a third public baseball field, while no public softball field exists. Or the dilemma of pouring thousands of dollars into turfing a football field that the field hockey team is prohibited from using. Or lights being installed on a grass football field which no other sport has access to. What message are we sending to young girls in our communities by allowing this to occur?

We can and must act to address gender inequality in youth athletics. That's why I'm advocating today for the advancement of a study bill, analyzing the feasibility of codifying Title IX protections in Connecticut, as they pertain to municipal recreation. With the information learned through this bill, we could begin to tackle this issue with informed and effective legislation in future legislative sessions.

I thank the committee for your time and ask that you give this bill a favorable report. I look forward to working with you as this bill moves forward.